

Contributions

NEED OF THE HOUR

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However much may be said as to the theological and other phases of the Christian religion, it must ever remain a basic fact that back of all preaching and teaching stands the *ego*. Not what a man says but what the man is and what he does is the paramount question. "Tho I speak with the tongue of men and of angels" it may be only so much noise which for the time being disturbs but leaves no lasting impression. For a year the newspaper world has been ringing with praise for the "man behind the gun," and this is just the lesson for the Christian church to learn—the superiority of character. No one it seems to me can study, say the naval battle at Santiago as told by "the captains" in the *May Century* without becoming impressed with the supreme need of something more than equipment. This latter may impress and for a time overawe, but something more is required.

In April '98 I was talking with a friend about the comparative chances of Spain and the United States in naval battle. She had been to Hampton Roads the previous year to the great naval rendezvous and had there seen and visited the Vizcaya. The appearance of this fighting machine on parade was simply overpowering and my friend and the world at large expected the man of war to give a good account of herself. That famous July Sunday however revealed the fatal defect. Polish and parade are good in men as in war vessels, but back of this must be force properly guided and applied and this force means strong, sterling, Christian character, not an intellectual assent to certain theological dogmas but a living, vital reduction to practice of the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. A total and vital departure from the ways of the world in our transactions with the world. What use is there for a man to talk repentance whose life has never been changed except in certain external formalities? What use for me to talk love when I am not strictly fair and just? Ruskin well says that "Love is the capstone of that temple whose corner stone is justice." If I misinterpret and put a mean construction on all the actions of those around me I need not speak of generosity.

What business have I to talk about forgiveness when I rankle with bitterness and am ready to strike back at any moment. "Father forgive them they know not what they do," must ever remain the Christians goal and ideal. His goal to be striven for, his ideal to model after. There never was a time perhaps when true, hearty, wholesome, Christian

character was more sought for by the world, and there never was a time when the counterfeit was more readily detected or more sharply rebuked and ridiculed. The paramount need of the pulpit and Sunday-school room is *character*. Learning is not for a moment to be despised, but St. John's "Little children love one another" in the church at Ephesus when he was too old to preach was vastly more powerful than multiplied words could have been. Powerful because of the St. John who uttered them. Any man or woman who is hungering and thirsting to do good in the world can do no better than to sit continually in the light of I Cor. 13, until it has been reduced to practice. The message of salvation coming from such an one must receive respectful hearing and must bear fruit. May God help us all to live more in this kind of an atmosphere.

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WHAT NEXT?

WM. KEEFER

When I read the editor's answer to Earnest Inquirer in No. 15, present volume, I was somewhat surprised. Earnest Inquirer seems to have been raised by pious parents, surrounded by good society, baptized according to the command of Christ, as soon as he thought the proper age had come. But did not feel like calling himself a poor, miserable sinner, if he tells the truth. Doth any one else think that he was? Is it necessary to become a poor, miserable sinner in order to become a Christian? Earnest Inquirer heard sermons on conversion which created doubts in his mind as to his own conversion. Nothing strange about that, for when we listen to all the wonderful stories about conversion and experience of so many people, their feelings, the wonderful sights they have seen, they can tell you the very time and place where they were overshadowed by the great power of God. Now while I don't want to dispute with these people, I don't object to their good feelings, or find fault with their experience. But I do want to say that there are thousands and multiplied thousands of people in the world who are as good Christians as the world has ever known who never had such wonderful experiences, and never can have, and is not required in the gospel of Christ. All the Lord requires of us is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, and obey his commandments. That is all we can do, and the Lord will do the rest, whether we can explain how he does it or not.

The editor's answer seems kind and all right until he winds up by encouraging the man to keep on inquiring, that he would have an experience after a

while. It looks so much like leaving a man stick in a tight place.

Then next, in No. 17, comes the brother from Fisher's Hill, Va., to Anxious Inquirer, and gives his experience, telling how he was baptized and preached before he was converted, and gives John Bunyan credit for opening his eyes to the truth, and now he admonishes all to look away from baptism with all other good works, considering them only as the result of the saved. So then, giving it in plain language and short words, baptism is not essential to being saved. When the Lord himself in the great commission (Mark 16:16) puts baptism on the same plane with faith, one is just as much in order to being saved as the other. My advice to the brother from Fisher's Hill would be to study the New Testament a little more instead of John Bunyan, or any other uninspired writer's productions.

Next comes our brother from Glenford, O., in No. 19, who thinks the conditions of Earnest Inquirer are hopeful, but thinks there is deadly poison in his soul and unless driven out will be ruinous. And judges from symptoms, such as (no pleasure in the worship of God) these words are not said by the inquirer, but are added by the brother. He, however, says that he could not be interested in prayer meetings or Endeavor societies. Of course I know nothing of this man, or his surroundings, and would not be competent of passing judgment, and would not if I could. He may be sincere or not, but one thing I do know and that is this, that prayer meetings and Endeavor societies are carried on in some localities in such a way that no good, pious person could be interested very much.

And now the brother adds and says, no hungrying and thirsting for the bread and water of life. This surely is a grave charge, and it seems to me if it were correct the man would not be an Earnest Inquirer, and now to cap the climax, because of the assertion that he could not call himself a poor, miserable sinner, our brother quotes an array of Scriptural texts and applies them all to this man's case. From Jer. 17:9. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Then he further applies the condition of the church of the Laodiceans who had back slidden and lost their love for the Master and his cause, and became lukewarm and were called miserable, poor and wretched. All these things are applied to this inquirer. He thinks this man is honest and sincere but awfully deceived.

The truth of the whole matter is that there is not a better established fact in the Bible than this that all people are not alike good or bad. And the idea that the boy who was raised in a pious